

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 SANTIAGO 8904

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1&2

TAGS: PINT PFOR SHUM PGOV CI

SUBJECT: CHILEAN GOVERNMENT AT THREE YEARS

REF: A) SANTIAGO 1157, B) SANTIAGO 4535 C) SANTIAGO 8833

1. SUMMARY: AT ITS THIRD ANNIVERSARY, CHILE'S MILITARY GOVERNMENT IS FIRMLY IN CONTROL. IT HAS FAILED TO STIMULATE REAL ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND HAS NOT SUBSTANTIALLY MODERATED ITS INTERNAL SECURITY PRACTICES. HENCE ITS BASE OF CIVILIAN SUPPORT HAS NARROWED. NEVERTHELESS, ITS DOMESTIC OPPONENTS -- CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC POLITICIANS, THE CHURCH, AND INDEPENDENT LABOR -- HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO DRIVE IT FROM ITS AUTHORITARIAN COURSE. DESPITE SOME INTRA-SERVICE FRICTION, THE INSTITUTIONAL UNITY OF THE ARMED FORCES HAS BEEN MAINTAINED, AND PINOCHET CONTINUES TO STRENGTHEN HIS PERSONAL ASCENDANCY. WE CONSIDER COMPREHENSIVE CHANGE TO BE MORE LIKELY IN THE ECONOMIC AREA THAN IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD. RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. WILL REMAIN COOL, BUT THE GOC SHOULD BE ABLE TO WITHSTAND FOREIGN PRESSURES ON HUMAN RIGHTS GROUNDS IN THE PERIOD IMMEDIATELY AHEAD. END SUMMARY

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2. SEPTEMBER 11 MARKS THE THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF MILITARY GOVERNMENT IN CHILE UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF ARMY CHIEF AND PRESIDENT AUGUSTO PINOCHET. AS THE PRESIDENT PREPARES HIS MAJOR ADDRESS FOR THE OCCASION, THE MOOD OF EXCESSIVE SELF-ASSUREDNESS, SO EVIDENT AT MID-YEAR (REFS A AND B), HAS EBBED PERCEPTIBLY. THE JUNTA MUST BE DISAPPOINTED WITH THE LESS THAN SATISFACTORY RESULTS OF ITS DOMESTIC ECONOMIC POLICIES (REF C). IT MUST ALSO BE CONCERNED OVER SOLOLY RISING TENSIONS IN THE SOCIETY. NONETHELESS, PRESIDENT PINOCHET STILL HAS GROUNDS FOR HIS SELF-RIGHTEOUS CONFIDENCE THAT THE REGIME'S BROAD CONCEPTION OF CHILE'S FUTURE REMAINS VALID. HIS AUTHORITY, AND THAT OF HIS GOVERNMENT, STILL REST FUNDAMENTALLY ON THE ARMED FORCES' UNIFIED BELIEF IN THEIR PATRIOTIC MISSION. DESPITE SOME GRUMBLING, THE MILITARY STILL SUPPORT PINOCHET.

3. THE PRESIDENT AND HIS GOVERNMENT: OVER THE THREE-YEAR PERIOD, THE PRESIDENT HAS PROVEN HIMSELF TO BE SHREWDER, TOUGHER AND MORE ASSERTIVE THAN HIS COLLEAGUES EXPECTED. THERE APPEARS TO BE NO SERIOUS PRESENT THREAT TO HIM, AND HIS PRESIDENTIAL POWER CONTINUES TO GROW. PINOCHET SHOWS EVERY SIGN OF ENJOYING HIS JOB. WHILE HE WORKS HARD IN SANTIAGO, HE BREAKS HIS ROUTINE BY REPEATEDLY STUMPING THE PROVINCES WITH THE GUSTO OF A BORN POLITICIAN. THERE HE PLAYSTO WHAT SEEM TO BE GENUINELY APPRECIATIVE AUDIENCES -- PEOPLE IMPRESSED NOT MERELY BY HIS CONCERN FOR THEIR LOCAL PROBLEMS BUT BY THE VIGOR OF THE MAN HIMSELF AND HIS STATUS AS THE EMBODIMENT OF THE OPPOSITION TO ALLENDE.

4. PINOCHET AND HIS GOVERNMENT TAKE PRIDE IN "DOING WHAT IS RIGHT, NOT WHAT IS EXPEDIENT." THEIR POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY IS FAR FROM SOPHISTICATED. IT IS STRAIGHTFORWARDLY AUTHORITARIAN, OBSESSIVELY ANTI-COMMUNIST, ALMOST INSTINCTIVELY CONSERVATIVE, BUT BY NO MEANS UNCONCERNED WITH SOCIAL WELFARE PROBLEMS. RUTHLESS -- AND SUCCESSFUL -- IN ITS PURSUIT OF INTERNAL SECURITY, THE GOVERNMENT TAKES PRIDE IN ITS HONESTY AND THE UNOSTENTATIOUS LIVES OF ITS LEADERS. IT HAS PROVEN ITSELF CAPABLE OF

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FOLLOWING FIRMLY ITS BASIC LINES OF POLICY, IN CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH A DEMOCRATIC REGIME WOULD BE REQUIRED TO CHANGE COURSE.

5. BUT IT SUFFERS FROM THE DEFECTS OF THESE VIRTUES. REFUSING TO COMPROMISE FOR THE SAKE OF CONCILIATION OR CONSENSUS, IT TENDS TO ANTAGONIZE PROGRESSIVELY LARGER NUMBERS OF CIVILIANS. OVER TIME, ONLY THE MORE CONSERVA-

TIVE AND RIGHTIST ELEMENTS OF THE POPULATION HAVE RETAINED THEIR EARLY ENTHUSIASM. FOR THEM, THE OVER-THROW OF ALLENDE STILL JUSTIFIES ALL THE HARDSHIPS OF THE PRESENT, AND THEY FOLLOW THE JUNTA IN ITS EFFORTS TO CREATE A NEW AND PURIFIED DEMOCRATIC BODY POLITIC IN CHILE. BUT THIS IS INCREASINGLY A MINORITY VIEW.

6. ACCORDINGLY A CERTAIN DRABNESS SUFFUSES THE CHILEAN POLITICAL SCENE. SINCE MOST DISSIDENCE IS REGARDED AS EQUIVALENT TO SUBVERSION, AND INTERNAL SECURITY SANCTIONS ARE STRINGENTLY APPLIED, EVEN THE MORE VOLATILE CHILEANS TEND TO TAKE REFUGE IN SILENCE, WITHDRAWAL, OR APATHY. THE GOVERNMENT CAN STILL ON ANY SINGLE DESIRED OCCASION MOBILIZE THE FORMAL SUPPORT OF THE MAJOR "GREMIOS" (PROFESSIONAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS). BUT IT HAS BEEN RATHER STRANGELY RELUCTANT TO THROW ITS WEIGHT BEHIND THE CREATION OF A SUPPORTIVE MASS MOVEMENT WHICH WOULD STRENGTHEN ITS POPULAR BASE.

7. THE JUNTA HAS CREATED A FORMAL STRUCTURE OF SUPPORT -- A DIRECTORATE OF CIVIL ORGANIZATIONS WHICH FUNCTIONS AT THE CENTER OF THE GOVERNMENT, AND A NATIONAL UNITY MOVEMENT (MUN) AND YOUTH FRONT ("FRENTE JUVENIL") WHICH ARE DEPICTED AS PRIVATE, SPONTANEOUS, APOLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS. THE GOVERNMENT WORKS WITH THE DIRECTORATE, BUT HAS MADE NO SERIOUS EFFORT TO DEVELOP THE MUN OR TO EXPLOIT THE YOUTH FRONT. WE WOULD ASSUME THIS REFLECTS THE MILITARY'S DISINCLINATION TO BE LINKED TO ANY MASS ORGANIZATION, EVEN A SUPPORTIVE ONE. THE CHILEAN MILITARY BELIEVE THEY MUST STAND ABOVE ALL PARTISAN GROUPS AND FIND IT DIFFICULT TO TRUST EVEN SYMPATHETIC CIVILIANS. FURTHERMORE, WE SEE NO INDICATION THAT THE JUNTA HAS YET DETERMINED EXACTLY WHAT EVEN AN APPROVED
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POLITICAL ORGANIZATION SHOULD DO. FOR THE PRESENT, THE MILITARY HAVE NO INTENTION OF SURRENDERING ANY POSITIONS OF REAL POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE.

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8. ACCORDINGLY, THE MILITARY ARE IN NO HURRY TO MOVE RAPIDLY WITH POLITICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL RESTRUCTURING. THE MILITARY'S PHILOSOPHY OF GOVERNMENT IS STILL EVOLVING. THE FIRST IMPORTANT NEW CONSTITUTIONAL ACTS ARE ONLY NOW ON THE POINT OF BEING PROMULGATED. THE PUBLICATION OF A COMPLETE NEW CONSTITUTION AND LEGAL STRUCTURE MIGHT IN ITSELF CREATE PRESSURES TO PUT IT QUICKLY INTO EFFECT. IMPLEMENTATION WOULD MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT TO JUSTIFY CONTINUED MILITARY RULE.

9. CHANGES IN MOOD AND THEIR EFFECTS: THE NEW EUPHORIA WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT WHICH CRESTED IN JUNE STEMMED FROM SEVERAL CONDITIONS: THE FIRST CONSISTENT SIGNS THAT THE ECONOMIC DEPRESSION WAS BOTTOMING OUT; SOLID INCREASES IN COPPER PRICES, WHICH LED TO SPECTACULAR SUCCESS IN BALANCING INTERNATIONAL PAYMENTS; AND A SERIES OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS WHICH WERE SEEN AS VINDICATING CHILE'S ANTI-COMMUNIST APOLOGETICS (E.G. SOVIET/CUBAN INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA, A BROADLY SYMPATHETIC MILITARY GOVERNMENT IN ARGENTINA). CHILEANS CONSIDERED THE OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, SUCCESSFULLY HELD IN SANTIAGO IN JUNE,
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A MARK OF THEIR RESTORED RESPECTABILITY AND A SIGN THAT THEIR INTERNATIONAL ISOLATION WAS ENDING.

10. THUS FORTIFIED, CHILEAN DIPLOMACY HAS BECOME MORE DYNAMIC. CHILE HAS ASSERTIVELY CHALLENGED ITS ANDEAN PACT COLLEAGUES TO PERMIT IT TO TAKE THE MEASURES

NECESSARY TO ENCOURAGE NEW FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND STIMULATE IMPORTS. IT IS OSTENTATIOUSLY TIGHTENING ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS SOUTHERN CONE NEIGHBORS, A MAJOR DEPARTURE FROM CHILE'S TRADITIONAL DIPLOMACY. CONCERNED OVER THE MILITARY BUILD-UP OCCURRING IN PERU, IT HAS CONTINUED TO PRESS ITS TACTICAL ADVANTAGE IN NEGOTIATING TO IMPLEMENT ITS PROPOSAL FOR A BOLIVIAN CORRIDOR.

11. ON THE OTHER HAND, AS WE HAVE NOTED IN SANTIAGO 8833, THE ECONOMY REMAINS IN POOR SHAPE. PER CAPITA REAL INCOME CONTINUES TO BE LOWER THAN FOR YEARS PAST. UNEMPLOYMENT, INFLATION, UNDER-UTILIZED PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY AND STILL HALTING INVESTMENT (DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN) ARE NAGGING PROBLEMS. INEQUALITY OF INCOME SEEMS TO HAVE INCREASED MARKEDLY. RECOVERY MAY HAVE STARTED, BUT IT IS AGONIZINGLY SLOW. BUT THE ONLY ALTERNATIVES SUGGESTED TO THE POLICY OF AUSTERITY INVOLVE GREATER STATE INTERVENTION -- HITHERTO ANATHEMA TO THE JUNTA'S PLANNERS.

2. THE ORGANIZED OPPOSITION: THE MOVEMENT OF THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT (MIR) HAS BEEN DESTROYED; THE COMMUNIST PARTY (PCCH) IS IN DISARRAY, AND THE UNIVERSITIES ARE UNDER CLOSE CONTROL. THE MARXIST OPPOSITION ABROAD CONTRIBUTES TO THE GOVERNMENT'S INTERNATIONAL ISOLATION BUT OFFERS NO DOMESTIC THREAT. DURING RECENT MONTHS THE THREE REMAINING CENTERS OF OVERT OPPOSITION -- INDEPENDENT LABOR, CENTER DEMOCRATIC POLITICIANS, AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH -- HAVE REACTED STRONGLY TO AUTHORITARIAN MEASURES AND FELT THE GOVERNMENT'S WRATH. TODAY, ALL THREE ELEMENTS FEEL BESIEGED.

13. THE DEMOCRATIC LABOR LEADERS, WHO SUPPORTED ALLENDE'S OUSTER, ARE PRESSING FOR UNION ELECTIONS (SUSPENDED SINCE THE COUP) AND WAGE INCREASES (REAL WAGES NOW AVERAGE 75 PERCENT OF WHAT THEY WERE AT THE END OF THE FREI GOVERNMENT).

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MENT IN 1970). THE GOVERNMENT, STUNG BY THEIR COMPLAINTS, HAS NOW BEGUN TO MOVE AGAINST THEM FRONTALLY: IN A STEP OF QUESTIONABLE LEGALITY, IT HAS REMOVED THE DEMOCRATIC HEAD OF THE IMPORTANT COPPER WORKERS FEDERATION AND REPLACED ITS GOVERNING BOARD MEMBERS BY JUNTA SUPPORTERS. WE EXPECT ADDITIONAL PUNITIVE MEASURES TO FOLLOW.

14. CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDC) LEADERS, INCREASINGLY ALIENATED BY THE GOVERNMENT'S HUMAN RIGHTS AND ECONOMIC POLICIES AND BY ITS AUTHORITARIANISM, HAVE DONE WHAT THEY COULD THROUGH LEGAL PROCEEDINGS AND CRITICAL ARTICLES AND LETTERS, TO KEEP THEIR PARTY ALIVE AND TO RESIST THE JUNTA'S ACTIONS. THEY PRESENT NO IMMEDIATE THREAT TO

THE REGIME. RECENTLY THEY HAVE RENEWED EFFORTS TO BUILD A WIDELY BASED, LOOSELY ALLIED OPPOSITION GROUP WHICH MILITARY AND CIVILIANS ALIKE COULD TAKE AS A SERIOUS "DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE" -- I.E., ONE EXCLUDING COMMUNISTS AND OTHER MARXISTS.

15. SO FAR THEY HAVE FOUND FEW TAKERS: NO MORE THAN A HANDFUL OF SOCIAL DEMOCRATS (PIR/PSD). EVEN THE PDC'S LABOR SURROGATES, FEARING GOVERNMENT RETALIATION, HAVE DECLINED FORMAL PARTICIPATION. THE GOVERNMENT'S EXPULSION OF PROMINENT HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYERS JAIME CASTILLO (PDC)9 AND EUGENIO VELASCO (PIR/PSD) IN EARLY AUGUST WAS MEANT, AND READ, AS A REACTION TO THE POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF THESE SPOKESMEN, AS WELL AS TO THEIR SPIRITED DEFENSE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF POLITICAL PRISONERS. PDC LEADERS NOW PROFESS TO FEAR THE PARTY WILL BE BANNED AND ITS MAJOR LEADERS EXPELLED -- ACTIONS WE BELIEVE UNLIKELY AT THIS TIME.

16. MOST OF THE CATHOLIC HIERARCHY IS MODERATE TO LIBERAL IN ITS ATTITUDE TOWARD POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES. MORE THAN IN MOST LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES, THE CHURCH EXHIBITS A STRONG SENSE OF SOCIAL COMMITMENT, AND A DEEP CONCERN OVER HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AND THE EFFECT OF THE GOC'S ECONOMIC POLICY ON THE POOR. AFTER SHARP CONTROVERSY WITH THE JUNTA OVER THESE MATTERS AT THE END OF 1975, THE CHURCH REVERTED TO A SOMEWHAT MORE PASSIVE ROLE AND THRUST INTO THE FOREGROUND THE RELATIVE CONSERVATIVE ARCHBISHOP FRESNO, THE NEW HEAD OF
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ITS EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE.

17. THIS PHASE, HOWEVER, ENDURED ONLY BRIEFLY. IN RECENT MONTHS GOVERNMENT ACTIONS HAVE PUT CHURCH AND GOVERNMENT ON A COLLISION COURSE, AND IN REACTION, THE FORMER'S DISCOURSE HAS BECOME HARSHER. WHILE IT IS STILL TRUE THAT NEITHER SIDE SEEMS TO WISH TO PUSH MATTERS TOWARD A CONFRONTATION, THE TENSIONS BETWEEN THEM ARE INCREASING. BUT UNLESS THE GOVERNMENT TAKES PUNITIVE ACTION AGAINST ONE OR MORE CHURCH LEADERS, THE HIERARCHY WILL DOUBTLESS LIMIT ITSELF TO EXPRESSIONS OF MORAL DISAPPROVAL, FOR THE MOST PART AVOIDING A DIRECT POLITICAL CLASH.

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18. DISSENT/SUBVERSION AND HUMAN RIGHTS: ESSENTIALLY, THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE CITIZEN ARE STILL SUBORDINATED TO SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS, ALTHOUGH NO SERIOUS SECURITY THREAT IS CURRENTLY APPARENT. IN MAY, THE GOC BEGAN TO APPLY THE SAME TACTICS IT HAD USED AGAINST THE TERRORIST MIR TO THE ORDERLY AND GRADUALIST, BUT SUBVERSIVE, PCCH. IN ADDITION, THE GOC TENDS TO BLURR THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN SUBVERSION AND DISSENT. IT HAS BUILT UP A STRONG INTERNAL SECURITY APPARATUS WHICH APPEARS TO FUNCTION WITH LITTLE RESTRAINT BY PRESIDENT PINOCHET OR ANY ONE ELSE. DESPITE NEW AND OLD JUNTA DECREES PROVIDING SAFEGUARDS FOR THE DETENTION AND TREATMENT OF PERSONS HELD UNDER STATE OF SIEGE CONDITIONS, SECURITY FORCES STILL REGULARLY ACT RUTHLESSLY AND ILLEGALLY.

19. THERE HAVE BEEN SOME CHANGES IN THE HANDLING OF THE JUNTA'S POLITICAL OPPONENTS. THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE BEING DETAINED THIS YEAR HAS DROPPED IN COMPARISON WITH EARLIER PERIODS. ON THE OTHER HAND, "DISAPPEARANCES" -- MAINLY UNACKNOWLEDGED DETENTIONS -- HAVE INCREASED DRAMATICALLY. REPORTS OF TORTURE OF RECENT ACKNOWLEDGED
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DETAINEES HAVE VIRTUALLY CEASED, AND THE GOVERNMENT HAS

EXILED HUNDREDS OF DETAINEES AND OTHER INCARCERATED ON
POLITICAL GROUNDS.

20. TO SUM UP, THREE YEARS AFTER THE OVERTHROW OF
ALLENDE, THE COUNTRY IS HURTING BUT THE GOVERNMENT RE-
MAINS STRONG. WE STILL SEE NO SIGN THAT ANY ELEMENT,
OR COMBINATION OF FORCES, INSIDE OR OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY,
PRESENTS AN IMMEDIATE THREAT TO THE REGIME. OCCASIONAL SERVICE
BACKBITING HAS NOT SO FAR SHAKEN THE INSTITUTIONAL UNITY OF
THE CHILEAN ARMED FORCES BUT DISCONTENT WITH PINOCHET COULD SOME
DAY BECOME SERIOUS. WE BELIEVE THAT A MODIFICATION OF GOVERNMENT'S
AUSTERITY POLICY TO COPE WITH DEPRESSED ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IS
LIKELY. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE SEE LITTLE SIGN OF A FUNDAMENTAL
LIBERALIZATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES, WHATEVER
PINOCHET MAY SAY ON SEPTEMBER 11.

21. NOTHING IN THIS PICTURE PORTENDS AN IMPROVEMENT
IN THE NOW COOL RELATIONS BETWEEN CHILE AND THE UNITED
STATES. AS WE SEE IT, BOTH ARE LIKELY TO REMAIN DUG IN
ON PRESENT POSITIONS. THE WOC TAKES COMFORT IN WHAT
IT REGARDS AS ITS SOMEWHAT LESS HOSTILE GENERAL INTER-
NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT. IT BELIEVES THAT ATTACKS ON ITS
HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES ARE LOSING STEAM OVER TIME AND ARE
BEING DIFFUSED AS IT BECOMES CLEAR THAT OTHER REGIMES
INSIDE AND OUTSIDE LATIN AMERICA ARE OPEN TO THE SAME
CRITICISMS. THE DAY WILL PROBABLY COME WHEN THE JUNTA'S
SELF-CONFIDENCE FALTERS, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF SUBSTANTIAL
DOMESTIC CHANGE BECOMES IMMINENT. BUT IN OUR VIEW, THAT
DAY IS NOT YET AT HAND.
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